

 r/HFY · Posted by u/Wolven5 Xeno 3 hours ago

A Night Out

 OC

"Are all humans this carefree when they're in dangerous situations?" Yez-Kip asked.

"I dunno. Maybe?" Alfimeh answered plainly, unpacking his lunch and sitting down next to his luxarian friend. "At least Emma is."

Yez-Kip returned his attention back down the shaft they sat at the edge of. Suspended by a harness twenty feet below them, between large fan blades, Emma haphazardly dug her hands through an open panel in the center of one of the fans. For the past week, it had been shutting down and turning back on intermittently. It was causing cooling issues for the reactor, and creating power shortages throughout the station.

They disconnected it from power before she went down, but there was no guarantee it would not briefly sputter back to life.

"Why are you and Emma so nonchalant about this?" the two foot tall alien asked incredulously as he watched the human rip another wire out of the panel.

"What do I have to worry about? I know she can fix it," the varalik said as he took a bite out of his sandwich.

"But there could still be some residual power left in its system that turns it back on!" he retorted sharply.

"Ya, sure, but that's a slim chance," Alfimeh carelessly slurred as he tried to use his tongue to fish out a piece of bread stuck in his teeth.

"But the *possibility* is still there. If the fan turns on while she's in there..." his mind trailed off and imagined the horrific scene that would follow. He looked down at Emma with concern.

"Eh, she would only be bothered by it if it killed her."

"How would she not- " Yez-Kip turned to his purple-skinned companion only to find him taking another casual bite of his meal, as if what he just said made complete sense, "... nevermind."

"Listen, if you going to work on a human station, you just have to get used to-"

Electricity sparked from inside the panel Emma was toying with, causing the fan to groan and the blades to twitch, but as quickly as it came, it went.

Both of the onlookers and Emma froze in place, afraid that any movement would tempt fate. Yez-Kip was convinced he would soon see the human plastered across the inside of the vent.

After a few more seconds of blissful silence, Alfimeh relaxed and continued chewing, "Hey Emma! If you die, can I have your stuff?" he shouted, mouth half full with the last of his sandwich.

"Screw you Alfi, I ain't dying today," she yelled back with a laugh. "You better get those credits ready, I'm gonna need a drink after this."

"What is she talking about?" Yez-Kip whipped his head to the varalik, heart still racing from the previous scare.

"I'm technically the one that was supposed to go down there. Told Emma that if she did it for me, I'd pay for her drinks for the next three months," Alfimeh wiped the crumbs off his lap. "Jokes on her though, it's a win-win for me. Emma is one hell of a fun drunk. Wanna come with?"

"I uhh... I don't know. We don't hold human alcohol well," Yez-Kip said timidly, breaking eye contact.

"Then I'll get you a sippy cup," the varalik grinned and patted the luxarian on the shoulder.

"I think it's fixed," the pit's resident yelled, her voice echoing up the chamber.

"Great, I'll run the tests," Alfimeh shouted back while standing up and making his way to the winch that held Emma's harness.

"I'd prefer you do that *after* you pull me up, thank you."

"Really?" Alfimeh responded with fake surprise as he pressed a button on the winch. "I think you'd make a pretty good mural." He then headed towards the ventilation controls.

The winch whined as it pulled Emma up the vent. As she reached the top, she grabbed onto the edge of the drop and lifted herself up the rest of the way, grunting as she rose to her feet.

"Alright Alfi, the Banshee or Mick's?" she asked while stretching.

"Oh gods, anything but Mick's," he cringed at the thought as he typed on the console. "The smell of that place should constitute a war crime."

"Aw come on," she sighed with disappointment. "It's part of the charm!"

"Why does 'charm' smell like body odor and cheap perfume?" the varalik sneered.

"Tch, you don't know what you're talking about. We're going to Mick's." Emma declared as Alfimeh groaned in displeasure.

"Wanna join us, Yezy?"

"Umm... I don't uhh..." Yez-Kip stammered, but before he could actually answer, he was interrupted by the fans whirring to life.

The roaring wind continued to rise until it felt like a thundering tornado in the luxarian's ears.

The trio gathered behind the console to watch the readouts and waited a few minutes to see if the faulty one would shut itself off.

"Looks like it's working," Alfimeh yelled over the noise.

"Of course it is," Emma shouted back, "*I'm* the one that fixed it."

Alfimeh flipped a switch on the console, and the tornado slowly died down.

"Kip, if *I* think Mick's smells bad, *you* might get your nose burnt off," the varalik said flatly as the wind fell silent.

"Oh shut up," Emma said, lightly punching his shoulder. "Don't listen to him, Yezy. He just lacks *culture*." She turned her nose up at Alfimeh, who only returned a dissatisfied gaze. "I also think I heard that Mick acquired a wine from Astla, pyaticberry wine, if I remember the name correctly," she added cheerily, looking down at Yez-Kip.

He recognized the name; one of his brothers got him a bottle when he graduated from the Academy. The warmth he remembered feeling when he drank it was like that of a cozy hearth. It's been so long since he left Astla; it'd be nice to feel like he was back home.

"That- that *does* sound good," the luxarian muttered, shrinking slightly.

"I'll go tell George that the fan's working," Alfimeh said, making his way to the door. "We can meet at Mick's after work, for dinner. If you're making me suffer through that smell, I'm at least going to enjoy Mick's cooking."

"He's such a drama queen," Emma mumbled to herself while watching Alfimeh leave the room. She then turned to her other alien friend, "I promise, Yezy, it's not as bad as he's making it out to be. Think of it as your welcome party."

"I don't know. Pyaticberry wine is pretty expensive if I remember, I don't think I could afford it," he said softly, avoiding eye contact.

"Don't worry about that, some poor sucker is buying all *my* drinks tonight," Emma smirked. "I can pay for it."

He perked up an inch and glanced up at her. "Really?"

“Ya! I really want you to come, Yezy. Please?” she pleaded with a tilt of her head.

He fidgeted with his hands and thought about it a while longer before nodding cautiously, “Alright. I’ll go.”

“Yay!” Emma clapped gleefully while bouncing up and down.

The rest of the day went by without any major incident, just a few junction boxes that needed rewiring. After his shift, Yez-Kip walked home to change out of his grease stained uniform and wash his cream colored fur.

Emma was one of the first people on the engineering team to welcome him to the station. She helped him learn how everything worked, and introduced him to a few other people, like Alfimeh. It did help ease his anxiety about coming here, but he was still nervous, and it wasn't just about the upcoming night.

It had only been two weeks since he arrived, and he was already having second thoughts about the whole thing. The job paid well, but everyone was so much larger than him and there were so few luxarians around. He felt out of place wherever he went.

Emma invited him to join her and Alfimeh in seeing a movie a few days ago, but he declined. It was just easier to say no than it was to step outside his comfort zone. He had doubts tonight would change anything, but he didn't want to make Emma sad again by declining. He also knew he had to at least try to leave his comfort zone behind if he ever wanted to feel like he belonged here.

When dinner time drew near, Yez-Kip left his apartment and walked through the enclosed streets of the station, following the directions Emma gave him. They led him to a small, tucked away corner where he spotted Emma and Alfimeh waiting at the front of a building with the word “Mick’s Pub” posted above the doorway.

“You came!” Emma cheered as the luxarian approached them.

“Ya, I said I would, didn’t I?” he replied with a pathetic laugh that only served to show how nervous he was.

“Everything will be fine, Yezy,” she assured him with a comforting tone, then opened the door and motioned for him to follow.

After a deep breath, Yez-Kip walked through the door and was immediately smacked with the smell Alfimeh was talking about earlier. Although, it didn’t smell as horrible as he was describing. Beyond the veneer of sweat, musty wood, and perfumes of varying odors, there were some scents that felt inviting.

The half-burnt candles along the window sills flickered in the dim light, and the wind from the open window cast their flowery aroma around the cramped room. Smoke spilled from a small window behind the bar; focusing on it, Yez-Kip could smell the food being cooked on the other side. The spices and meats sizzling from within made his mouth water. Overall, the place didn’t smell *bad*, just... unique.

The short luxarian followed close behind Emma so as to not get lost in the crowd that towered over him. He and Alfimeh were led to a circular booth along the wall with one of those candle decorated windows. Yez-Kip lifted himself up onto the seat, the leather padding squeaking as he positioned himself upright. Emma and Alfimeh shuffled into their positions just as a large bearded human with a stain covered apron lumbered up to their table.

"Emma! Good to see you. It's been a while," the man bellowed, his arms outstretched.

"Hey Mick, good to see you too," she responded with a joyful smile. "Sorry about the absence, the company I keep has poor taste," she added, glancing at her coworker who was trying to discreetly cover their nose.

"Ah, Alfimeh, I remember you," Mick said, dropping his meaty hand onto the varalik's shoulder, "Would you like your meal with a side of air fresheners?"

"The strongest you have, please. Thanks," he joked, his voice muffled behind his hand.

Mick let out a hearty laugh then turned to his final patron, whose head barely reached over the top of the table. "And who's this fellow?"

"This is Yez-Kip, just joined the power station's engineering team about two weeks ago," Emma replied, rubbing the luxarian on his back. "Do you still have that pyaticberry wine, Mick?"

"I sure do, you can have it; on the house," he declared with a wave of his hand.

Yez-Kip snapped up straight in his seat. "Really!? Are- are you sure?" he blurted out.

"Of course! I want to give you a good welcome to the station, a friend of Emma's is a friend of mine." He leaned in closer, his booming voice lowering to a grumble. "Plus, I don't get many luxarians coming in here, and no one else is buying it." He straightened back up with a jovial chuckle, and then pulled out a notepad that was far too small for his hands. "Now, what are y'all ordering?"

After the table placed their orders, Yez-Kip surveyed the room. Most of the patrons were human, but some krotzil and varalik mingled amongst them. A mild murmur from all the overlapping conversations filled the room. Occasionally, an audible laugh would break through the sea of chattering voices only to soon fall back beneath its tide.

"So Yezy, how do you like the place so far?" Emma asked, sweeping her hand over the room.

"It's chaotic, but... in a pleasant way," he said, looking out into the crowd. "It's not what I'm used to, but I think I'm okay with it. You wouldn't find anything like this on Astla; the Directorate is too... orderly. Also it..." he lowered his voice to a whisper and

chanced an embarrassed glance over at Alfimeh, "It doesn't smell that bad."

A smug grin crept across Emma's face as she slowly turned to the varalik, who just rolled his eyes in response.

It wasn't long before Mick brought over their food along with the pyaticberry wine and a pitcher of human alcohol that Emma and Alfimeh were going to be sharing. When the wine bottle was placed in front of him, he noticed that it was bigger than one you'd find on Astla. He guessed that it was to make the wine a more enticing import for other species, since most would consider a 'normal' sized bottle too small.

Yez-Kip poured some into his glass, and took a sip. Immediately, he felt soothed and relaxed. He was back on Astla, surrounded by his family, and he couldn't help but smile as the elixir danced through his veins and warmed his insides. He finished what was left in his glass, then grabbed the bottle to pour some more.

After dinner and as the night went on, the wine bottle and pitcher became lighter, and the bar grew more lively as humans flooded in and added to the ocean of voices. Yez-Kip had already gone through half of his bottle, and considering how much larger it was than the typical luxarian wine bottle, he was definitely beginning to feel its effects. He was staring aimlessly out into the crowd when Emma's voice pulled his attention back.

"How's the wine?" she asked, finishing the last of her drink.

"It tastes better than I remember," he replied with simple happiness.

"Mind if I try it?"

He shook his head and slid the bottle over to her. She poured some of the wine into her empty glass, and after a swirl and a sniff, tilted the wine into her mouth. Placing her glass back down on the table, she smacked her lips together a few times, and then looked down at the bottle. Yez-Kip could tell she was trying to hide her disappointment.

"It's okay," he smiled while lazily leaning his head on his glass, "you can say it just tastes like juice."

Emma giggled and pushed the bottle back over to him. "It tastes like pretty good juice though."

Yez-Kip chortled, causing his head to slip from the perch it rested on. As he brought his eyes back up, they fell on the recently refilled pitcher of human alcohol that Emma was now pouring into her glass.

"Now let me try some of yours," he said mischievously, reaching his hands out.

"After tasting what you consider alcohol, I don't think that'd be a good idea," she chuckled, placing the pitcher by Alfimeh, far from the luxarian.

"Aw, come on," Yez-Kip pleaded as he leaned his body over the table, grasping for the pitcher now out of reach of his small arms. "I'm considered *very* alcohol tolerant for a luxarian."

"Is that true?" Alfimeh chimed in, his brow raised, clearly not believing him.

"No," the luxarian stated with confidence and his head held high.

The table fell into a laughing fit. Yez-Kip flopped back onto his seat, snatched the bottle of pyaticberry wine up, and then took a swig straight from the source.

The next few hours blurred together. The trio continued to share stories and laugh amongst themselves, but soon a band showed up and began to play music. People pushed tables and chairs out of the way to make an empty space in front of them, and then began to dance. Emma dragged Alfimeh and Yez-Kip out onto the spontaneous dance floor, hopping up and down the whole way.

Yez-Kip couldn't understand any of the lyrics to the songs being sung, and he wasn't sure if it was because of an issue with his translator, the singer's singing capability, or the alcohol. That didn't stop him, however, from trying to sing along to every song with the rest of the humans.

When the crowd on the dance floor grew to an unruly size, Emma - or at least Yez-Kip thinks it was Emma - brought the short luxarian up to sit atop her shoulders. He celebrated the fact that he was now the tallest one in the room, and the humans nearby joined in his celebration, even if they didn't know what they were celebrating.

For the rest of the night Yez-Kip danced, but did not remember what he danced to. He cheered, but did not remember what he cheered about. He made new friends, but did not remember their names. One song blurred into the next, and time was an afterthought. The only thing he remembered was that he was having fun.

At some point in the night, he might have been given human alcohol, but he wasn't sure. He couldn't remember, might have just been water. Emma told him it was alcohol, but it just tasted like water.

When the haze began to clear and his mind began to focus, he found that he wasn't in the bar anymore. He was sitting on Emma's shoulders, slouched over the top of her head, as she walked down a street with Alfimeh alongside them.

Yez-Kip groaned and brought a fist up to rub his eyes.

"Oh, good, you're alive," Emma joked, trying to catch a glimpse of the luxarian that rested on her head. "Hey Yezy, do you live by the Promenade?"

"Ya," he grumbled, his eyes still fighting to stay open.

"See, I told you," Alfimeh said with a casual glance at Emma. "I think I remember him telling me it was the apartment next to the theater."

"Thas the one," Yez-Kip mumbled, the words practically tumbling out of his mouth.

"Well, we're almost there," the human said. "Do you want us to stay with ya, bud? You went pretty hard back there."

"Ya," Alfimeh chuckled. "We probably should've cut you off and swapped you over to water sooner than we did."

"No, I think I'll be fine. Thank you though."

"Alright, if you say so," Emma said like a mother would to a child disregarding their sage advice. "But I'm calling you when I wake up, and if you don't answer, Alfi and I are breaking down your door."

Yez-Kip managed a weak laugh, "Yes ma'am." He paused for a few seconds and thought about the night he just had before continuing, "And... Thanks for inviting me. I had a lot of fun."

"Of course! I'm glad you came," Emma said, reaching up to rustle his fur.

The little luxarian rested his eyes while being carried the rest of the way to his apartment.

Before arriving at this station, Yez-Kip was terrified. Home was so far away, and he didn't know how he'd feel about being around aliens three times his size. He was so close to just rejecting the job offer at the last minute to avoid the stress entirely.

But after meeting people like Emma, Alfimeh, Mick, and all the others he couldn't remember the names of, he was happy he didn't. Despite his size and all the other differences he brought along with it, they all treated him like a lifelong friend.

He was sure he'd still feel a little anxious about going out in the future, especially without alcohol there to dull the nerves, but his comfort zone was definitely a little bit bigger now. He was starting to feel like he belonged here.

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I will forever shill my Nomad series.